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From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
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Subject: Fw: Militia hands over Tripoli airport to government (Reuters)

From: OpsNewsTicker
Sent: Monday, October 10, 2011 05:01 PM
To: NEWS-Mahogany
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Subject: Militia hands over Tripoli airport to government (Reuters)

TRIPOLI, Oct 10 (Reuters) - Libya's interim government took over the country's main international airport from a group of regional fighters on Monday as part of its efforts to consolidate control over strategic infrastructure.

The head of the ruling National Transitional Council (NTC), Mustafa Abdel Jalil, told journalists other militia groups would soon follow suit and start handing over control of key installations to civilian authorities.

The airport had been under the command of Mukhtar al-Akhdar, commander of a unit of fighters from the western town of Zintan, which converged on Tripoli to help drive Muammar Gaddafi from power in August.

"After they liberated this important location, they are handing it over to the technical people who will take care of organising flights from this important place," said Jalil at the airport, which has not restarted handling flights.

"The fighters committed themselves to hand over a location every week according to instructions by the National Council and the executive committee for the benefit of this country," he added.

Tensions have risen between militias from outside Tripoli and a military council led by veteran Islamist dissident Abdulhakim Belhadj, who says he has the endorsement of the NTC and has called on other armed units to pull heavy weapons out of the capital.

Turkish Airlines, which recently restarted flights, and domestic operators have been using a military airport in Tripoli.

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